

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION ONE OF TWO BRIDGETOWN 0151

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR,BB

SUBJ: CURRENT PERCEPTION OF THE US IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN

REF: STATE 010605

1. AS YOU ARE AWARE, THIS EMBASSY SERVES TWO INDEPENDENT STATES, BARBADOS AND GRENADA, AND FIVE INTERNALLY SELF-GOVERNING ONES, THE WEST INDIES ASSOCIATED STATES. WHILE THREE OF THE WIAS HAVE ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR INDEPENDENCE, ONE IS EXPECTED TO ACHIEVE INDEPENDENCE THIS YEAR, TWO OTHERS IN 1977, AND THE REMAINING TWO BY 1980 AT THE LATEST. EVEN NOW, THE FIVE CONDUCT INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS AND, ON MORE LIMITED BASIS, WITH COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE AREA, INCLUDING U.S. AS INDEPENDENCE IS REALIZED, THEY WILL EXPAND SCOPE OF THEIR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS, JOIN UN, OAS, AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. FOREIGN POLICY QUESTIONS WILL INTEREST THEM TO MUCH LARGER EXTENT THAN IS NOW THE CASE, AND THEIR AWARENESS OF US AND OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY USG AT HOME AND ABROAD WILL INCREASE GREATLY. AT PRESENT, HOWEVER, THEY ARE OCCUPIED WITH ESSENTIALLY DOMESTIC ISSUES, AND THEIR PERCEPTION OF MOST OF ISSUES CITED IN REFTEL IS INCHOATE.

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THUS, IN FORMULATING REPLIES TO YOUR QUESTIONS I HAVE CITED

ATTITUDES OF THE ASSOCIATED STATES ONLY INsofar AS MORE
GENERAL ISSUES ARE CONCERNED. IN ALL CASES, REPLIES
REPRESENT CONSENSUS OF KEY MEMBERS OF THE COUNTRY TEAM.

2. DESPITE WATERGATE, VIETNAM DEBACLE, EXPOSURES OF CIA
MISDEEDS, ETC., BARBADIANS, GRENADIANS AND OTHER PEOPLES
OF EASTERN CARIBBEAN STILL PERCEIVE OF US AS AN ENORMOUSLY
RICH, ENORMOUSLY POWERFUL COUNTRY AND, WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS,
CHERISH HOPE THAT LIFE-STYLE OF ITS PEOPLE MAY SOME DAY BE
THEIR OWN. MOST OF THEM, THOUGH INCLINED TO REGARD NIXON
AS AN INDIVIDUAL UNDESERVING OF SYMPATHY, FIND HIS POLITICAL
SINS MINOR AND ARE GENUINELY PUZZLED THAT HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN
FORCED OUT OF OFFICE FOR THEM. NEVERTHELESS, THEY EXPRESS
ADMIRATION FOR ROLE OF PRESS AND FOR IMPARTIALITY OF JUDI-
CIAL SYSTEM IN U.S. THE US ROLE IN VIETNAM ALWAYS CAUSED
SOME CONCERN HERE, BOTH BECAUSE US WILLINGNESS TO INTERVENE
IN OTHER COUNTRIES' AFFAIRS SEEMED TO POSE POTENTIAL THREAT
TO ALL SMALL, WEAK NATIONS AND BECAUSE HOPE PERSISTED THAT
ONCE THE WAR ENDED, SOME OF THE MONEY BEING SPENT ON IT
MIGHT BE SPENT CLOSER TO HOME. SINCE FALL OF VIETNAM, THERE
HAS BEEN LITTLE DISCUSSION OF THE AFFAIR. SUSPICION OF CIA
HAS LONG BEEN A CONSTANT IN THE AREA, AND SOME OF THE
CARIBBEAN LEADERS, INCLUDING BARBADOS' BARROW, HAVE SOME-
TIMES SEEMED TO SEE AGENTS BEHIND EVERY TREE. THE CONGRESSIONAL
COMMITTEE REPORTS HAVE CERTAINLY DONE NOTHING TO DISSIPATE
THESE DELUSIONS OF PERSECUTION, BUT WE DO NOT THINK THAT ANY-
ONE CONSIDERS THE ISSUE TO BE OF OVERRIDING IMPORTANCE FOR
THESE ISLANDS. CHILE IS LARGELY REMOVED FROM THE ATTENTION
OF, NOT TO MENTION RANGE OF SYMPATHY OF BARBADIANS, GRENADIANS,
AND OTHER ISLANDERS, INCLUDING GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, HENCE
PERCEPTIONS OF US ROLE THERE HARDLY EXIST.

3. WE DOUBT THAT THE OUTCOME IN VIETNAM HAS AFFECTED VIEWS
OF MOST BARBADIANS, GRENADIANS, AND OTHER ISLANDERS WITH
RESPECT TO US ABILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO LIVE UP TO INTER-
NATIONAL COMMITMENTS. THERE IS AN UNSPOKEN ASSUMPTION HERE
THAT THE US WOULD NOT STAND IDLY BY AND LET SOVIET UNION,
CUBA, OR ANOTHER ACTUALLY OR POTENTIALLY UNFRIENDLY STATE
ESTABLISH A FOOTHOLD IN EASTERN CARIBBEAN.

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4. THE US POLITICAL SYSTEM IS NOT GENERALLY WELL UNDERSTOOD
IN AREA OF OUR JURISDICTION. BECAUSE COUNTRIES IN THE AREA
FOLLOW THE WESTMINSTER MODEL, THE SEPARATION OF POWERS CONCEPT
IS ALIEN, AND THERE IS TENDENCY TO CONFUSE RESPECTIVE ROLES
OF THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATURE. AS A RESULT OF SUCH CON-
FUSION, IT IS OFTEN ASSUMED THAT CONGRESS WILL FOLLOW
PRESIDENT'S LEAD IN A GIVEN MATTER AND, WHEN IT DOES NOT,
THAT BAD FAITH OR A FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP IS TO BLAME.

MOREOVER, UNDUE IMPORTANCE IS SOMETIMES ATTACHED TO STATEMENTS OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS. WE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT READINESS OF EITHER THE GOB OR GOG TO COOPERATE WITH THE US WOULD BE GREATLY INFLUENCED BY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS.

5. WHILE WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT TRADITIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARD US HAVE THUS FAR UNDERGONE ANY SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE, WE CONSIDER IT A VERY REAL POSSIBILITY THAT, IN NOT-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE, THEY MAY DO SO, ESPECIALLY IN THE SMALLER ISLANDS. BORN OF POVERTY AND FRUSTRATION, RESENTMENT OF THE COLONIAL PAST, AND GROWING NATIONAL AND BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS, AND NURTURED BY SOME AMBITIOUS AND UNSCRUPULOUS LEADERS AND OUTSIDE INFLUENCES INIMICAL TO WESTERN VALUES, RADICALISM IS ON THE RISE THROUGHOUT EASTERN CARIBBEAN, EVEN IN CONSERVATIVE BARBADOS. SINCE FOR THE RADICALS US IS THE ENEMY, IT IS PREDICTABLE THAT, AS THEY GAIN GROUND, THE FRIENDLY ATTITUDES GENERALLY HELD HERE WILL BE MODIFIED, THOUGH TO WHAT EXTENT WE ARE NOT NOW IN A POSITION TO SAY. CERTAINLY, ANY IMPORTANT MODIFICATION WOULD BE REFLECTED IN FOREIGN POLICIES OF GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED. INDEED, EVEN IF POPULAR ATTITUDES REMAIN CONSTANT, GOVERNMENTS MAY BE EXPECTED TO IDENTIFY INCREASINGLY WITH THIRD WORLD.

6. FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THEIR RELATIONS WITH BARBADOS, CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA WAS A MISTAKE AND CUBAN USE OF THIS ISLAND AS A REFUELING POINT AN EVEN GREATER ONE. THE BARBADIANS ARE EMBARRASSED BOTH BECAUSE THEY ALLOWED THEMSELVES TO BE TAKEN IN (WE BELIEVE) AND BECAUSE RESULTANT PUBLICITY MADE THEM LOOK FOOLISH. ON OTHER HAND, GOB'S PROTEST TO CUBA HAS GIVEN RISE TO CHARGES OF BARBADIAN SUBSERVIENCE TO US AND SOME OF BARROW'S CRITICS HAVE ADVANCED PROPOSITION, HOWEVER, IMPLAUSIBLY, THAT PERMITTING

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EXISTENCE OF US NAVAL FACILITY HERE IS AS UNNEUTRAL AN ACT AS FACILITATING MOVEMENT OF CUBAN TROOPS TO ANGOLA. BARROW, IN CALLING A VERY TARDY HALT TO THE CUBAN FLIGHTS, SAID THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER'S ATTEMPT TO JUSTIFY US INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA DID NOT MAKE HIS (BARROW'S) TASK ANY EASIER. NO DOUBT SOUTH AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA ALSO MAKES CUBAN ROLE THERE SEEM LESS REPREHENSIBLE TO MANY IN BARBADOS AND ELSEWHERE IN EASTERN CARIBBEAN.

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